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SUBJECT: TRAVEL WARNING - LEBANON

11. This Travel Warning updates information on security threats and ongoing political tensions in Lebanon, and informs U.S. citizens of current safety and security concerns. The Department of State continues to strongly urge that Americans defer travel to Lebanon and that American citizens in Lebanon consider carefully the risks of remaining. This Travel Warning supersedes the Travel Warning for Lebanon issued on October 17, 2007.

12. The U.S. remains concerned about the threat of terrorist attacks against Western and Lebanese government interests in Lebanon. Groups such as Al-Qaeda and Jund al-Sham are present in Lebanon, and they have issued statements calling for attacks against Western interests. The Department of State is also concerned that the clashes between terrorist extremists and the Lebanese Armed Forces that occurred in the Nahr al-Bared refugee camp in northern Lebanon from May to September 2007 could occur in other camps in Lebanon. U.S. citizens who visit refugee camps in Lebanon risk becoming trapped during hostilities.

13. There have been several assassinations of military and political figures in Lebanon within the past year. On December 12, 2007, a senior member of the Lebanese Armed Forces was killed by a car bomb; a Lebanese Internal Security Force officer was killed in a similar fashion on January 25, 2008. Two anti-Syria Members of Parliament were assassinated in separate car bombings in Beirut in June and September 2007. On January 15, 2008, an Embassy vehicle was damaged and two Embassy employees were injured in yet another bombing. In each of these incidents innocent bystanders have been injured or killed.

14. On June 7, 2007, a bomb exploded in the town of Zouk

Mousbeh, north of Beirut. This followed the discovery of explosive-laden vehicles in Eastern Lebanon. Since May 20 2007, explosions have occurred in the Beirut neighborhoods of Achrafieh and Verdun, the Beirut suburb of Sad Al-Bouchrieh, and the resort town of Aley.

¶15. The terrorist group Hizballah has threatened retaliatory actions for the assassination of Hizballah official Imad Fayez Mugniyah, who was killed in Syria by unknown assailants on February 12, 2008. Prominent members of Hizballah have intimated that they hold the United States partially responsible for Mugniyah's death, and it is possible that someone may lash out against U.S. interests or persons.

¶16. Landmines and unexploded ordnance pose significant dangers throughout southern Lebanon, particularly south of the Litani River, as well as in areas of Lebanon where civil war fighting was intense. More than a dozen civilians have been killed and over 100 injured by unexploded ordnance following the armed conflict in July-August 2006. Travelers should watch for posted landmine warnings and strictly avoid all areas where landmines and unexploded ordnance may be present.

¶17. The Department of State strongly urges U.S. citizens to defer travel to Lebanon, and urges U.S. citizens already in Lebanon to carefully consider the risks of remaining. U.S. citizens who choose to remain in Lebanon are encouraged to maintain a high level of vigilance; confirm and maintain the validity of their passports and other U.S. travel documents for themselves and their family members; monitor the local security situation and be ready to depart quickly in the event of any deterioration in the situation.

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¶18. U.S. citizens traveling to Lebanon or resident in Lebanon should be aware the U.S. Embassy has limited ability to reach all areas of Lebanon. The Embassy cannot guarantee that Embassy employees can render assistance to U.S. citizens in areas where there is limited government control, such as the southern part of Lebanon where Hizballah continues to be active.

¶19. In a crisis situation, U.S. citizens are responsible for arranging commercial or private means of transportation to depart Lebanon. If evacuation is warranted, only when all other transportation options are unavailable will the U.S. Government assist U.S. citizens in leaving a country. This service will be provided on a cost-recovery basis, which means the traveler must reimburse the U.S. government for the cost of the travel. The lack of valid travel documents will slow the U.S. Embassy's ability to provide assistance. Further information on the department's role during emergencies is provided at http://www.travel.state.gov/travel/tips/emergencies/emergencies_1212.html.

¶10. The Department of State considers the threat to U.S. government personnel in Beirut sufficiently serious to require them to live and work under strict security restrictions. These practices limit, and may occasionally prevent, access by U.S. Embassy officials to certain areas of the country. Unofficial travel to Lebanon by U.S. government employees and their family members requires prior approval by the Department of State.

¶11. The Embassy is located in Awkar, near Antelias, Beirut, Lebanon. Public access hours for American citizens are Monday through Thursday, 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.; however, American citizens who require emergency services outside of these hours may contact the embassy by telephone at any time. The telephone numbers are (961-4)

542-600, 543-600, and fax 544-209. American citizens may register with the embassy online by visiting <https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs>. Information on consular services and registration can also be found at <http://lebanon.usembassy.gov> or by phone at the above telephone numbers between 2:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday local time.

¶12. Updated information on travel and security in Lebanon may be obtained from the Department of State by calling 1-888-407-4747 within the United States and Canada or, from overseas, 1-202-501-4444. Additional details can be found in the Department of State's Country Specific Information for Lebanon, and the Worldwide Caution, which are available on the Department's Internet website at <http://travel.state.gov>.

¶13. Minimize considered.
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